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Nicaragua has asked Costa Rica to investigate reports that two Sandinist leaders, reported kidnapped by U.S.-backed Nicaraguan guerrillas nine days ago, were being held in Costa Rica.

In a note made public today, the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry said it had information that Ray Hooker and Patricia Delgado, abducted September 5, had been taken to Costa Rica, where the Nicaraguan rebel group the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) has bases.

The Costa Rican government said it had no knowledge of this. But ARDE spokesmen said the two Sandinists were being held by Eden Pastora, the former ARDE military chief who was expelled last July over differences with other ARDE leaders.

Pastora was expelled last year from Costa Rica. ARDE spokesmen said Pastora was probably holding the two hostages in Nicaragua and was intending to swap Hooker and Delgado with the Sandinists.

In Managua, the government newspaper Barricada quoted Selena Delgado, Patricia's sister, as saying: "There can't be any negotiations with guerrillas, it would create a precedent and it would amount to giving them a political victory."

"This is a new attempt by the Central Intelligence Agency, which mercenaries forces serve, to erode Costa Rica's neutrality," the Foreign Ministry said.

The note asked the government of Costa Rica to find the hostages and secure their release.

The Sandinists say at least 50 Nicaraguans, including youths of between 14 and 16 years old, have been kidnapped by U.S.-backed guerrillas in the past week.